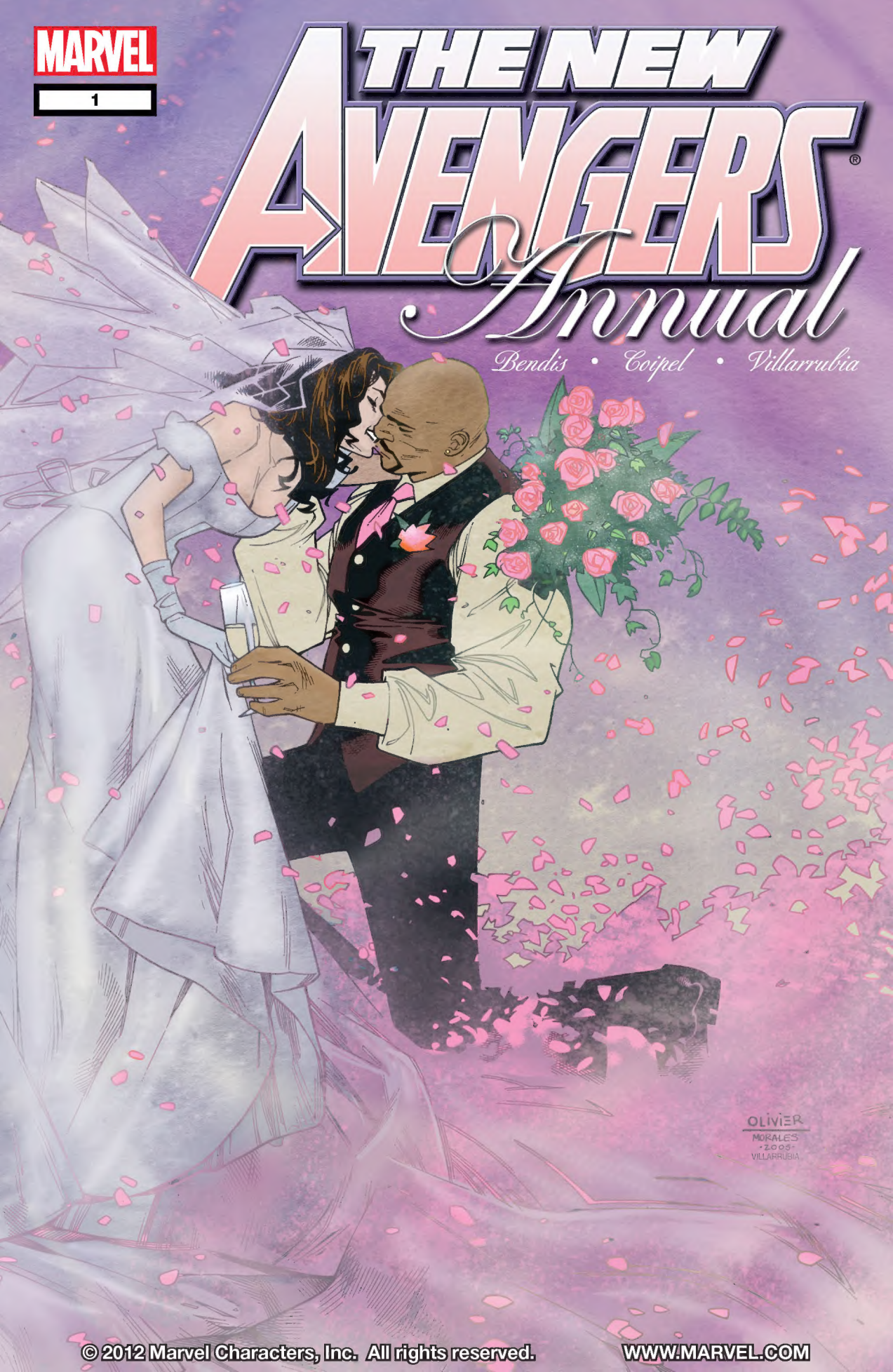

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And there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's mightiest heroes found themselves united against a common threat! On that day, the Avengers were born--to fight the foes no single super hero could withstand!

THE NEW AVENGERS Annual

When a breakout occurs at the Raft, a maximum-security prison, Captain America, Iron Man, Luke Cage, Spider-Man, Spider-Woman, and the Sentry gather together to battle the rioting criminals. Captain America convinces Iron Man that a new team of Avengers has been brought together by fate. The New Avengers, including the X-Man Wolverine, now operate out of Stark Tower in New York City.

On their first mission, the New Avengers are ambushed by a renegade S.H.I.E.L.D. battalion led by Agent Yelena Belova, a.k.a. the Black Widow. She is horribly disfigured in the fight, but is taken in by mysterious caretakers who offer to rebuild her shattered body and give her a chance at revenge.

Meanwhile, Luke Cage and his longtime girlfriend, ex-super hero Jessica Jones, have just had a baby. Luke recently proposed to Jessica, but she has not yet given him an answer.

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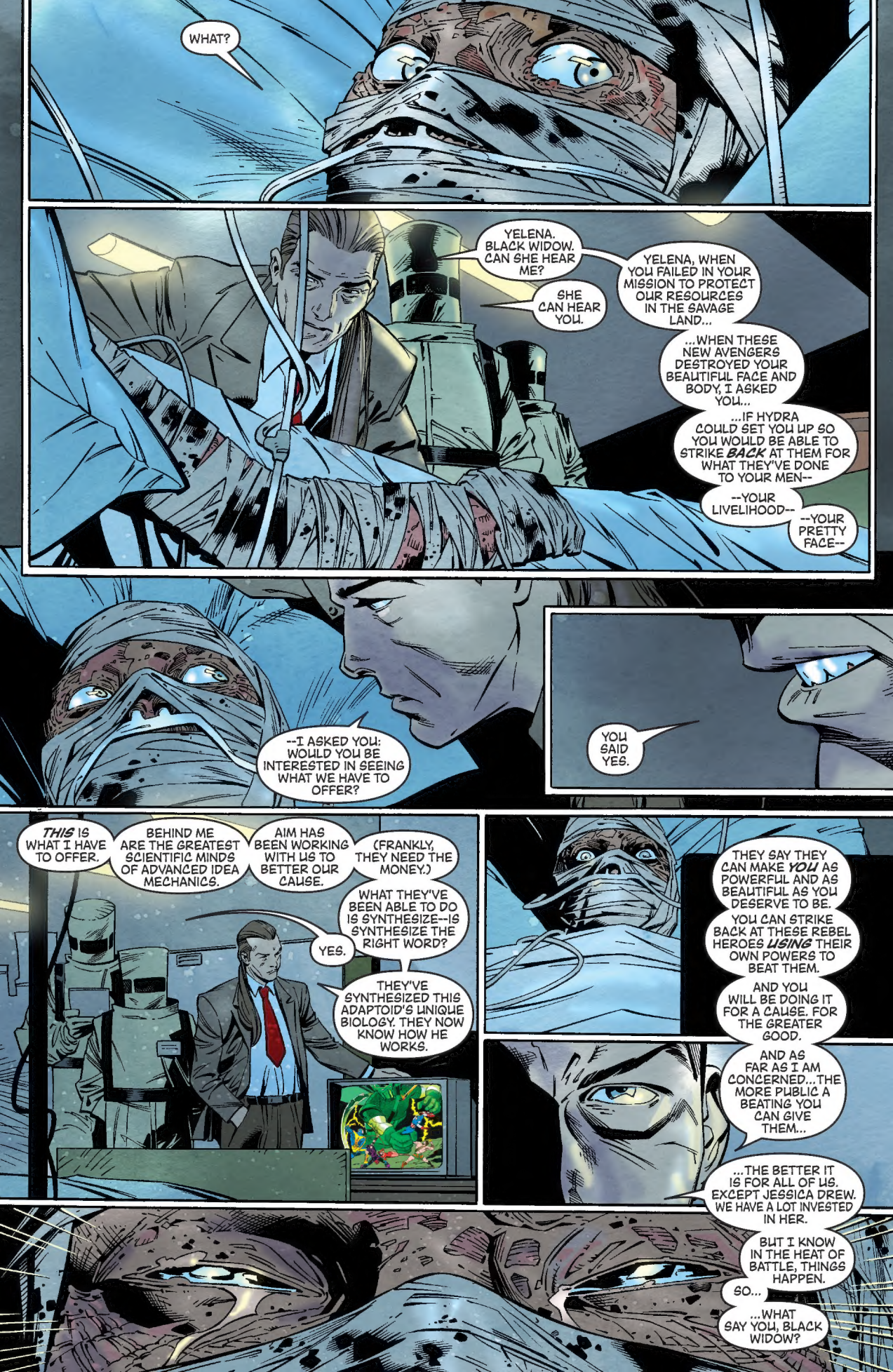
THEY CALLED IT...THE ADAPTOID.


WHAT?
YELENA. BLACK WIDOW. CAN SHE HEAR ME?
SHE CAN HEAR YOU.
YELENA, WHEN YOU FAILED IN YOUR MISSION TO PROTECT OUR RESOURCES IN THE SAVAGE LAND...
...WHEN THESE NEW AVENGERS DESTROYED YOUR BEAUTIFUL FACE AND BODY, I ASKED YOU...
...IF HYDRA COULD SET YOU UP SO YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO STRIKE BACK AT THEM FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO YOUR MEN--
--YOUR LIVELIHOOD--
--YOUR PRETTY FACE--
--I ASKED YOU: WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SEEING WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER?
YOU SAID YES.
THIS IS WHAT I HAVE TO OFFER.
BEHIND ME ARE THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC MINDS OF ADVANCED IDEA MECHANICS.
AIM HAS BEEN WORKING WITH US TO BETTER OUR CAUSE.
(FRANKLY, THEY NEED THE MONEY.)
WHAT THEY'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO IS SYNTHESIZE--IS SYNTHESIZE THE RIGHT WORD?
YES.
THEY'VE SYNTHESIZED THIS ADAPTOID'S UNIQUE BIOLOGY. THEY NOW KNOW HOW HE WORKS.
THEY SAY THEY CAN MAKE YOU AS POWERFUL AND AS BEAUTIFUL AS YOU DESERVE TO BE.
YOU CAN STRIKE BACK AT THESE REBEL HEROES USING THEIR OWN POWERS TO BEAT THEM.
AND YOU WILL BE DOING IT FOR A CAUSE. FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
AND AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED...THE MORE PUBLIC A BEATING YOU CAN GIVE THEM...
...THE BETTER IT IS FOR ALL OF US. EXCEPT JESSICA DREW. WE HAVE A LOT INVESTED IN HER.
BUT I KNOW IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, THINGS HAPPEN.
SO...
...WHAT SAY YOU, BLACK WIDOW?

AVENGERS TOWER, NEW YORK CITY

LUKE CAGE, PREPARE TO DIE!

YOU DID THIS TO ME, AND NOW YOU MUST PAY!

JESSICA JONES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WHAT'S GOIN' ON, GIRL?

WHAT'S GOING ON? *LUKE!* I'M GOING TO PASS OUT!

I'VE BEEN DRAGGING THIS DAMN BABY OF YOURS ALL OVER THE DAMN CITY UP THREE HUNDRED DAMN FLOORS OF THIS DAMN SKYSCRAPER AND IT'S A MILLION DAMN DEGREES OUTSIDE AND THE BABY--

DON'T YOU *HAVE* POWERS?

YOU GIVING ME *SASS*?

RECETTE CREPES

LET ME AT THIS BABY. LOOK AT THIS BABY!

HERE WE GO...

CHOCO

LOOK AT THIS! LOOK AT THIS *BEAUTIFUL* BABY.

VIVA LA FEMME

MS. JONES, MAY I OFFER YOU ANYTHING?

I LOVE YOU, JARVIS.

THANK YOU, MA'AM.

YOU WANT A BABY?

NO, MR. PARKER, I WANT TO LOOK AT *THIS* ONE AND HAND IT BACK BEFORE IT *PUKES* UP ON ME.

WHEW!

ONE BABY IS ENOUGH.

THIS IS THE CUTEST BABY ON THE PLANET EARTH.

AIN'T IT?

MAKE ME AN OFFER, MJ!

MOMMY DIDN'T MEAN IT.

I THINK SHE DID.

NO, I MEAN IT. I THINK I'M FALLING FOR YOU.

YOUR BOYFRIEND CAN SEVERELY HURT ME, MA'AM.

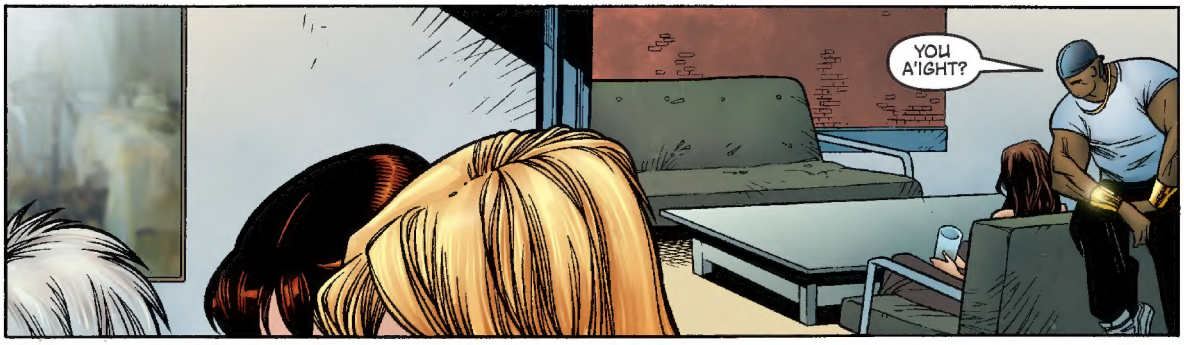
THAT'S TRUE.

ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT ME?

WELL, WHO IN THIS RELATIONSHIP WEARS SPIDER-MAN FOOTIE PAJAMAS?

JESSICA DREW, LOOK AT THIS BABY.

THAT *IS* A BABY. NOW GET IT AWAY FROM ME.


YOU A'IGHT?

OKAY, SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE SCARING THE $%#@ OUT OF ME.

YES.

YES, WHAT?

YOU ASKED ME TO MARRY YOU.
I'M SAYING YES.

YO! SHE SAID YES!!
WE'RE GETTIN' MARRIED!
WOW.
HEY!
MAZEL TOV, MAN.
YOU'LL LOVE BEING MARRIED! I LOVE BEING MARRIED!
WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
NOW YOU CAN'T BE CRAZY LATER AND PRETEND YOU DIDN'T JUST COMMIT.
I DON'T DO THAT.
UH-HUH.
I DID IT ONCE.
UH-HUH.
OKAY. WE GOTTA GO.
TONY, SHOULD I STAY IN COSTUME?
HELL YES. WE NEED CAPTAIN AMERICA, NOT STEVE ROGERS.
AND SHOW AS MUCH FLAG AS POSSIBLE.
ME, TOO?
YES. THE SENTRY'S GOTTA START MAKING SOME FRIENDS.
BUT, BOB, NO OFFENSE. WITH YOUR MENTAL STATE THE WAY IT IS...IF YOU FEEL YOURSELF GETTING WOBBLY OR ANYTHING, JUST EXCUSE YOURSELF.
OKAY.
NO OFFENSE.
NO. IT'S OKAY.
JUST SMILE.
WHO YOU GUYS MEETING?

MISTER MAYOR, THANK YOU FOR COMING TO AVENGERS TOWER.

MISTER STARK.

I'M VERY GLAD YOU HONORED MY REQUEST.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF YOU HAD CONTACTED THE CITY ABOUT THIS NEW SUPER HERO CLUBHOUSE *BEFORE* YOU WENT AND MADE IT A SUPER HERO CLUBHOUSE.

BAXTER BUILDING, AVENGERS TOWER...

...IT'S JUST TOO MUCH SUPER HERO CRAP FOR ONE CITY...

...I DON'T LIKE IT. IT DRAWS TOO MUCH ATTENTION.

MISTER MAYOR.

CAPTAIN AMERICA.

BRINGING OUT THE BIG GUNS, TONY?

HE'S THE TEAM LEADER, AND I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT HIS POINT OF VIEW.

THERE'S ALSO SOMEONE ELSE I WANT YOU TO MEET. THIS IS THE NEWEST AVENGER... THE SENTRY.

MISTER MAYOR, IT'S AN HONOR.

I THINK A LOT OF YOUR CONCERN OVER AVENGERS TOWER IS ABOUT MY WATCHTOWER, WHICH IS BUILT DIRECTLY ON TOP OF IT.

IS *THAT* WHAT THAT IS?

WELL, YES, AND I THOUGHT A TOUR MIGHT--

HI.

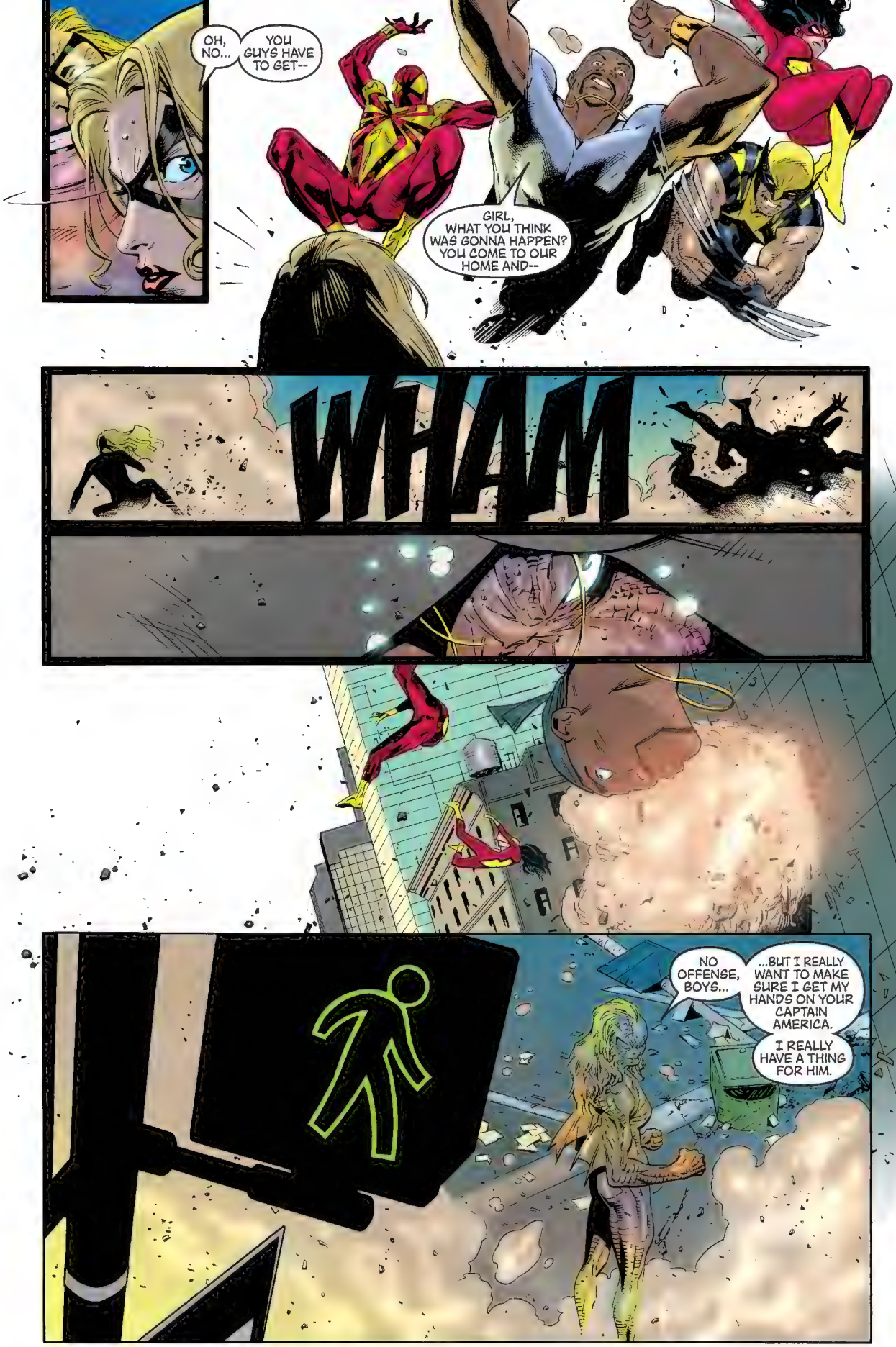
DO I *KNOW* YOU?

OH N--

MOM! MOM!
I'M TELLING YOU NOW!
WHEN WAS I SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU? IT JUST HAPPENED.
I AIN'T HERE.
BOOM
AGH!
WHOA!
HOW MANY FLOORS UP ARE WE?
THAT'S NOT GOOD.
THIRTY-SIX.
AVENGERS...

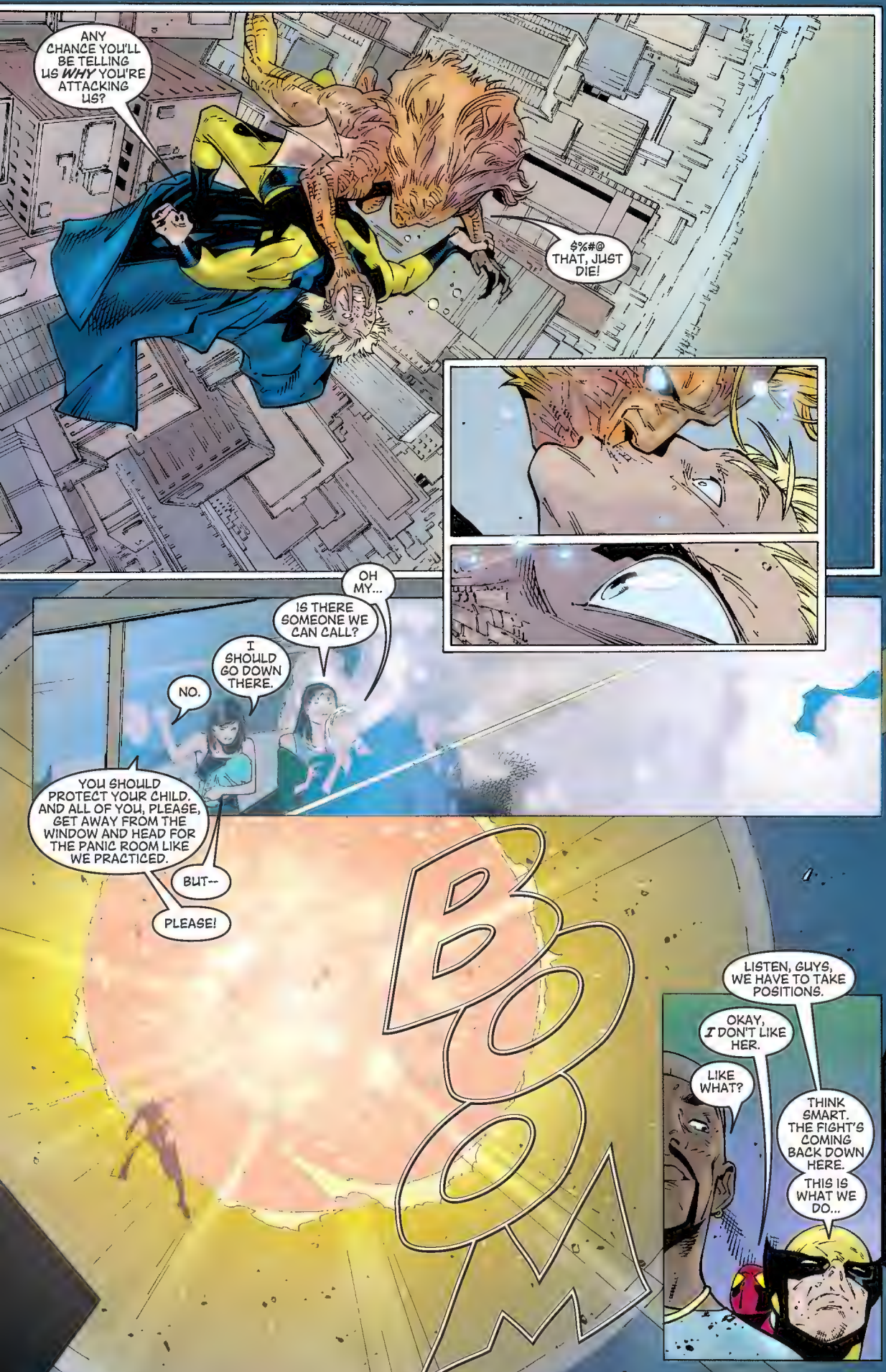
...ASSEMBLE!
WOW.

MAN, YOU PICKED THE WRONG ADDRESS!
MR. MAYOR, MY APOLOGIES.
WH-WHAT IS THIS?
FOOM
I KNOW I'M RELATIVELY NEW TO THE SUPER HERO GROUP THING, BUT SHOULDN'T WE HAVE A POLICY ABOUT PEOPLE JUST DROPPING BY TO GET THEIR BUTTS KICKED?
SHOULDN'T WE REQUIRE AN APPOINTMENT OF SOME SORT?
REALLY.
MS. MARVEL. CAROL DANVERS.
DIDN'T EXPECT YOU HERE, TOO.
OH, BABY...


OH, NO...
YOU GUYS HAVE TO GET--
GIRL, WHAT YOU THINK WAS GONNA HAPPEN? YOU COME TO OUR HOME AND--
WHAM
NO OFFENSE, BOYS...
...BUT I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE I GET MY HANDS ON YOUR CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I REALLY HAVE A THING FOR HIM.

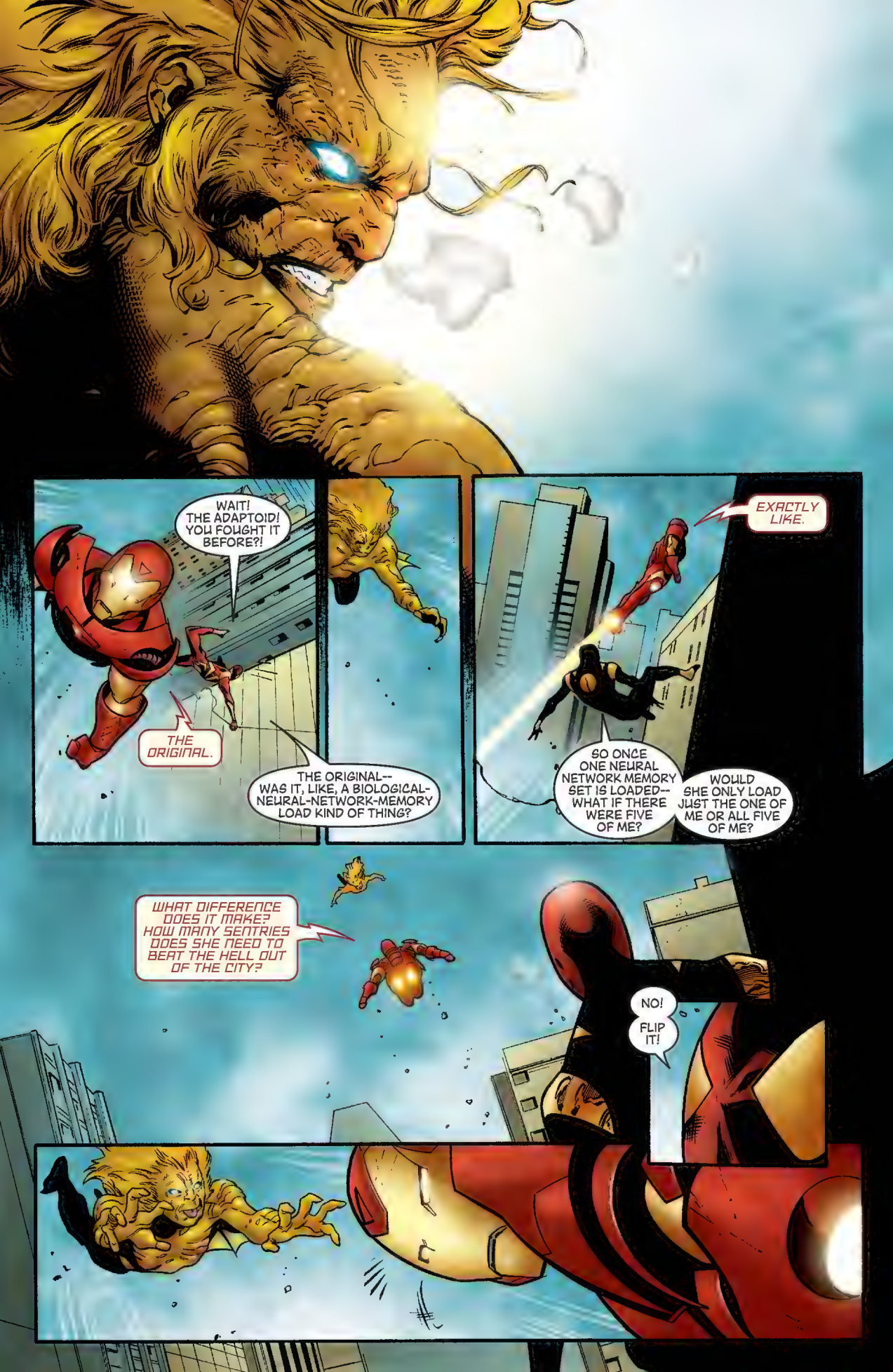
WHAT-- WHAT--WHAT ARE YOU--?
SEAT BELT.
OBJECTS
I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
WHAT IS GOING--?
SIR...
...PLEASE FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT.
SCREEEEEE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HOPEFULLY DRIVING BETTER THAN SHE CAN FLY.
SCREEEEEE
BOOM

BOOM
UNBREAKABLE SKIN.
THANK YOU, MISTER LUKE CAGE.
EXCUSE ME...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO ME BACK THERE...
...BUT IT *REALLY* TICKED ME OFF.
THERE HE GOES AGAIN!
OH NO!
BOOM
OH NO, WHAT?
I KNOW WHAT THAT GIRL IS.
HE CAN'T WIN.
HE'S GOING TO DIE.


ANY CHANCE YOU'LL BE TELLING US *WHY* YOU'RE ATTACKING US?
$%#@ THAT, JUST DIE!
OH MY...
IS THERE SOMEONE WE CAN CALL?
I SHOULD GO DOWN THERE.
NO.
YOU SHOULD PROTECT YOUR CHILD. AND ALL OF YOU, PLEASE, GET AWAY FROM THE WINDOW AND HEAD FOR THE PANIC ROOM LIKE WE PRACTICED.
BUT--
PLEASE!
BOOM
LISTEN, GUYS, WE HAVE TO TAKE POSITIONS.
OKAY, I DON'T LIKE HER.
LIKE WHAT?
THINK SMART. THE FIGHT'S COMING BACK DOWN HERE.
THIS IS WHAT WE DO...

FBAM
GOTCHA!
JESSICA, CATCH!
OOF!
I GOTCHA!
THE HELL IS SHE THROWING HIM AT ME FOR?
SHE'S GOT HER HANDS FULL.

HEY, TOOTS! I CAN ABSORB POWER TOO, DID'JA KNOW THAT?
SO NOT ONLY AM I GOING TO HAVE *MY* POWERS, I'M GOING TO HAVE *DOUBLE* MY POWERS BECAUSE I'M TAKING MY POWERS *BACK* FROM YOU.
YOU'RE STILL FAT.
SMACK
IRON MAN. CAROL SAID IT'S A SUPER-ADAPTOID ADAPTOID THING.
HOW MANY OF YOU DID SHE TOUCH?
JUST ALL OF US.
YOU NEVER TOUCH AN ADAPTOID--
OH, LIKE WE KNEW.
HEEYYAAGGHH!


WAIT! THE ADAPTOID! YOU FOUGHT IT BEFORE?!
THE ORIGINAL.
THE ORIGINAL-- WAS IT, LIKE, A BIOLOGICAL-NEURAL-NETWORK-MEMORY LOAD KIND OF THING?
EXACTLY LIKE.
SO ONCE ONE NEURAL NETWORK MEMORY SET IS LOADED-- WHAT IF THERE WERE FIVE OF ME?
WOULD SHE ONLY LOAD JUST THE ONE OF ME OR ALL FIVE OF ME?
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? HOW MANY SENTRIES DOES SHE NEED TO BEAT THE HELL OUT OF THE CITY?
NO! FLIP IT!

STALL HER!
STARK! YOU COWARD!
WELL, THAT'S RATHER JUDGMENTAL.
WAIT, DON'T GO!
I WASN'T DONE STALLING YOU YET!
I'M GOING TO-- AH!
DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT HITTING ON YOU.
I'M JUST HOPING THAT YOUR RELATIVE INEXPERIENCE WITH FLYING MAKES IT EASIER TO--
--DO THIS!
CRASH

THWAP
THWAP
WOOF!
NICE LANDING, HOWARD HUGHES.
DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD...
...I STILL CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO USE THE JOYSTICK ON AN X-BOX, AND I WENT TO COLLEGE.
PUM
AND *HERE'S* A LITTLE SOMETHING TO TELL YOUR GRANDKIDS ABOUT.
YEEAARRGGHH!
WHOOPS! GOT TO GO.
I'LL KILL YOU FOR THAT, I SWEAR TO--
WHAM

YOU!
FAM
NYUAAA!!
SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT IN THE SAVAGE LAND WHEN I HAD A CHANCE!
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, I KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE, YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING, BACKSTABBING--
NAAGGHH!
NOW!
NO!

ALL RIGHT!
FASTBALL SPECIAL, AVENGERS STYLE!
YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING SPIDER-WHORE. I KNOW ALL YOUR DIRTY SECRETS, YOU--
SMASH
SMASH

WHOOPSIE-DAISY.

THANKS. I COULDN'T GET IT TOGETHER.

YOU NEED BIGGER WEB PITS.

THWIP THWIP

WELL DONE, KID.

KID?

AND NOW, MUTANT, YOU'RE STUCK.

FSHAM

AGGHH!

I'M GIVING YOU ONE CHANCE.

LIE DOWN ON YOUR STOMACH WITH YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK.

YOU ARROGANT--

YOU JUST KILLED YOURSELF! YOU JUST KILLED YOURSELF!

I HAVE ALL OF YOUR POWERS! I HAVE ALL OF YOU NOW.

NOT QUITE ALL.

BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO ME THAN MOST PEOPLE THINK.

FSHAM FSHAM FSHAM

WOW.

TOTALLY MY IDEA, BY THE WAY.

YAGH!

FBOOM

YOUR SURRENDER IS ACCEPTED.

HOW DOES HE DO THAT?

TONY'S GOT A LOT OF TRICKS UP HIS SLEEVE.

NO, SERIOUSLY, HOW DOES HE DO THAT?

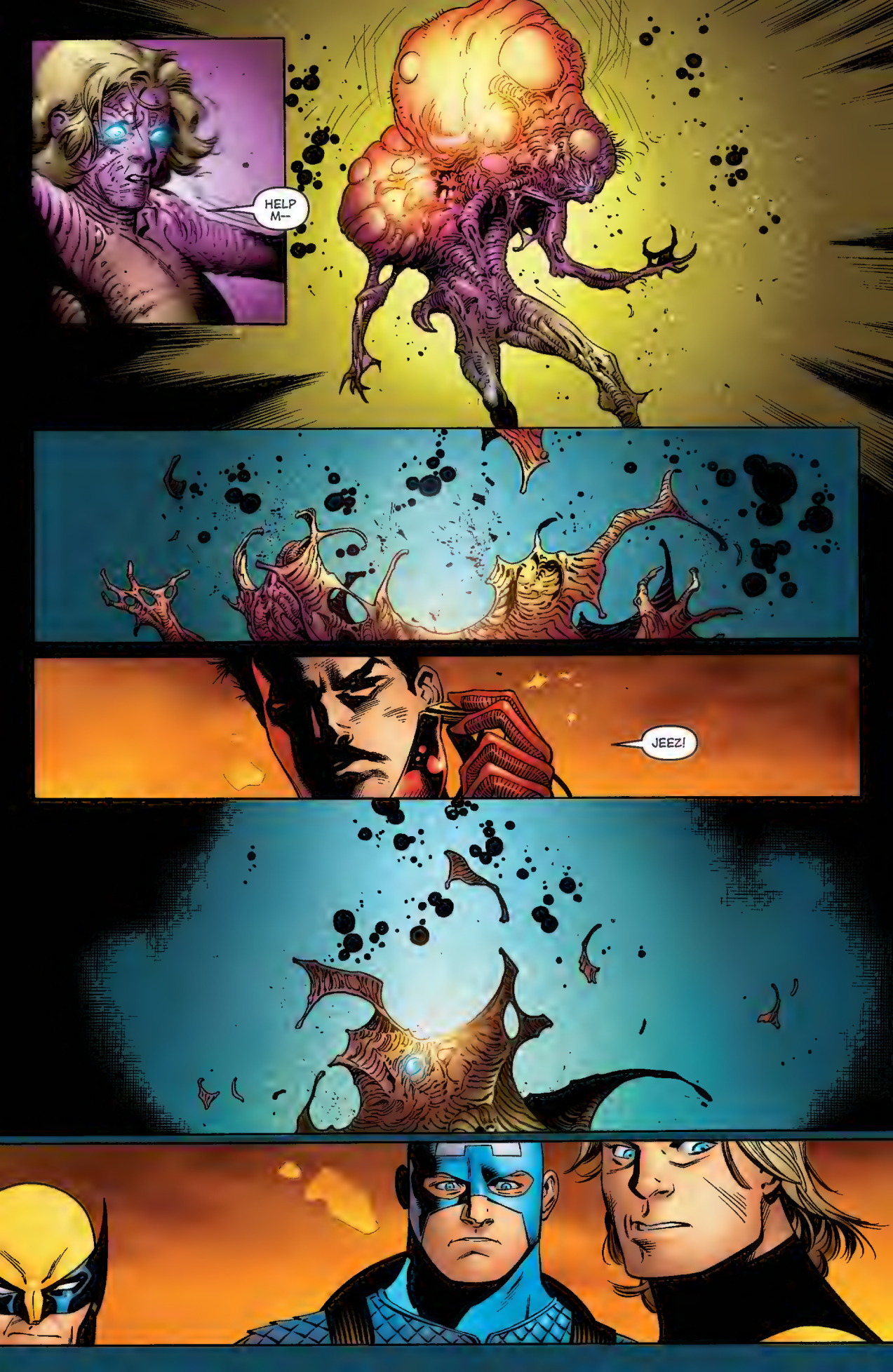
B12 REPULSOR RAY.
R43 RIGHT PUNCH.
F6 LEFT PUNCH.
B9 UPPERCUT.
G56 REPULSOR RAY FULL POWER.
D43 RIGHT PUNCH.
FSHAM
KTANG
KTANG
KTANG
FSHAM
FSHAM
FSHAM
OKAY.
NOW HOW ABOUT A GROUP HUG?

FOOM
FSHAM
KANG
KANG
FSHAM
FOOM
DAMN!
YOU CAN'T BEAT ME!!
I HAVE WOLVERINE'S MUTANT HEALING FACTOR AND UNBREAKABLE BONES.
I HAVE LUKE CAGE'S UNBREAKABLE SKIN.
YOU CANNOT BEAT ME!
WANNA BET?

YAAAGHH!
YOU STOLE MY POWERS?
POWER LIKE MINE TAKES EXACTING CONTROL OF MIND AND BODY.
AND I LEARNED THAT THE HARD WAY.
EVERY DAY IS A FIGHT TO KEEP THE DEMONS DOWN. EVERY DAY!
ONE SLIP--
--AND THE MADNESS THAT WAITS FOR ME IS ALL-CONSUMING.
IF YOU'VE BECOME THE SENTRY, THEN YOU MUST ALSO BECOME THE VOID.
EVERYTHING YOU DO OR SAY AS THE SENTRY MUST BE ANSWERED FOR.
AND THE VOID COMES TO DO JUST THAT.
EEVVEERRYYYTHHIINNGG!

NNN...
NNN...
TELL US WHO DID THIS TO YOU. WHO TURNED YOU INTO THIS? WHO TURNED YOU AGAINST US?!
DON'T.
WHERE ARE THEY?
TELL US WHERE.
AND I CAN SEND THE VOID AWAY.
N-N-NO, THEY'LL KILL ME.
WHERE?!
PLEASE. PLEASE.

WE AIN'T STUPID. WE KNOW IT'S HYDRA. JUST TELL US WHO AND--
THIS IS LIVE?
HER EYES. WE INJECTED A FIGNIT & PROTOTYPE BROADCAST--
ENGLISH.
WE SEE WHAT SHE SEES.
IT CAN'T CONTINUE. SHE'S AT THE THRESHOLD.
PULL THE PLUG.
I'LL NEVER-- AGH!


HELP M--
JEEZ!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?
I DIDN'T DO THAT.
DUDE!
I DIDN'T DO IT.
NO, SOMEONE HIT A FIZZER.
A MOLECULAR DESTRUCT BUTTON.
SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T WANT SOMEONE LIKE ME TO BE ABLE TO DO ANY READINGS ON HER.
NOW I CAN'T TELL HOW THEY DID TO HER WHAT THEY DID TO HER.
NOW I CAN'T EVEN TELL WHAT SPECIES SHE WAS.
THEY WHO?

YOU EVER HAVE ANY DEALINGS WITH THIS BLACK WIDOW?
IN THE SAVAGE LAND. LIKE THE REST OF YOU.
AND WHERE ELSE? DON'T YOU LIE TO--
HEY!
IF THIS WAS HYDRA... THEY TOOK THE ATTACK TO OUR HOME.
I DON'T TAKE THAT LIGHTLY.
I DIDN'T BEFORE WANDA, I DOUBLY DON'T NOW.
WHY ARE YOU YELLING AT ME?
I KNOW WE ALL AGREED TO LET YOU PLAY BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN BETWEEN US AND HYDRA BECAUSE IT'S HALF OUR FAULT YOU HAVE TO...
...BUT I DO HAVE A LIMIT.
TONY.
I DON'T LIKE NOT KNOWING WHO I AM FIGHTING.
WELL, IT'S NOT ME.
TONY DIDN'T MEAN IT.
YES, HE DID.
"WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO UNITE THIS MAN AND THIS WOMAN IN THE BONDS OF HOLY MATRIMONY, WHICH IS AN HONORABLE ESTATE."

INTO THIS, THESE TWO NOW COME TO BE JOINED.

IF ANYONE PRESENT CAN SHOW JUST AND LEGAL CAUSE WHY THEY MAY NOT BE JOINED, LET THEM SPEAK NOW OR FOREVER HOLD THEIR PEACE.

LUCAS, WILL YOU HAVE THIS WOMAN AS YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED WIFE, TO LIVE TOGETHER IN THE STATE OF MATRIMONY?

WILL YOU LOVE HER, HONOR HER, COMFORT HER, AND KEEP HER IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, AND BE TRUE TO HER AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE?

SURE.

JESSICA, WILL YOU HAVE THIS MAN AS YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBAND, TO LIVE TOGETHER IN THE STATE OF MATRIMONY?

WILL YOU LOVE HIM, HONOR HIM, COMFORT HIM, AND KEEP HIM IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, AND BE TRUE TO HIM AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE?

I WILL.

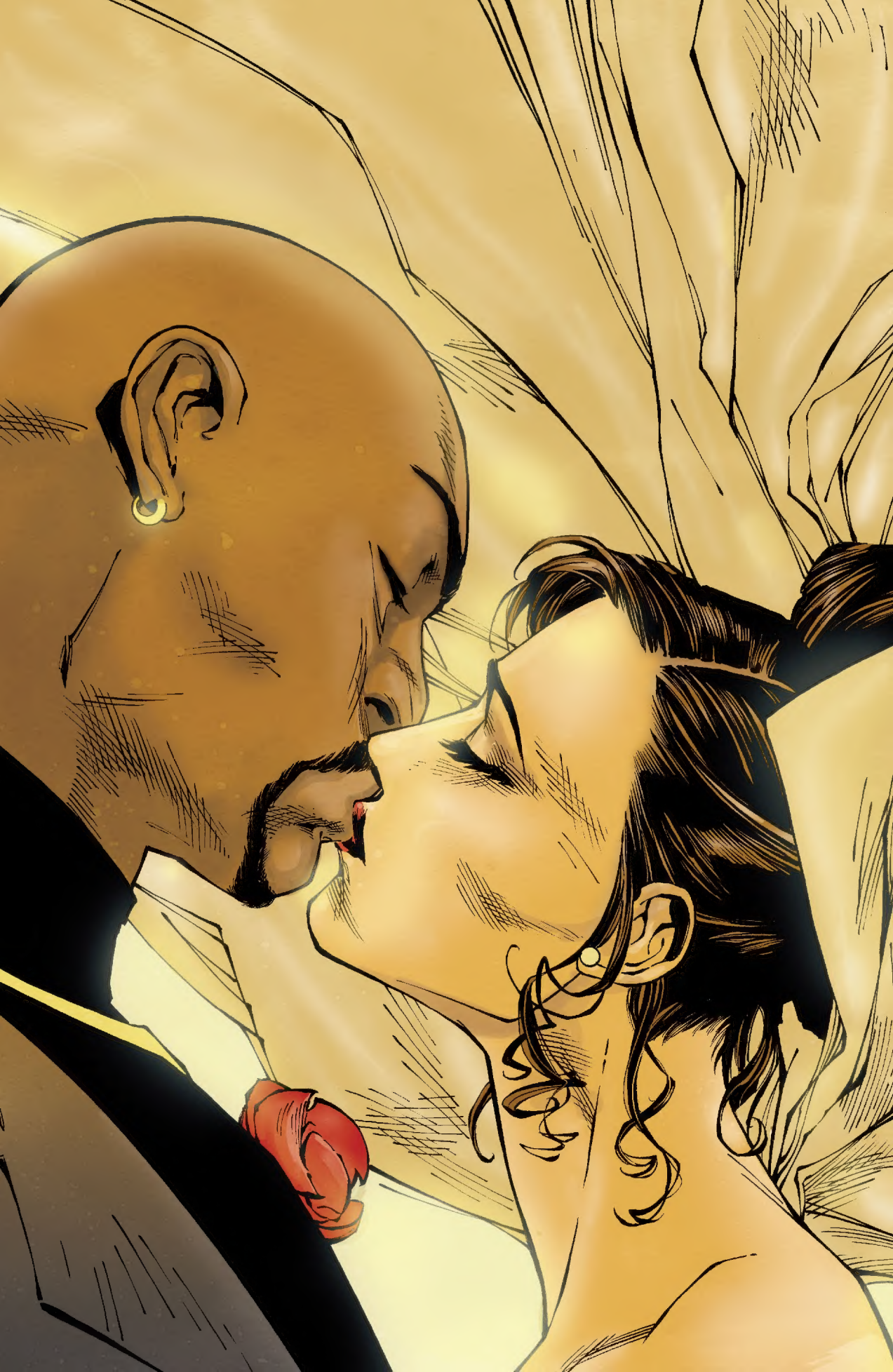
FOR AS MUCH AS LUKE AND JESSICA HAVE CONSENTED--

WAIT. WAIT.

JESSICA.

UH-OH.

THESE WORDS. THEY'RE JUST WORDS.
I'M DEDICATING MY LIFE TO YOU AND--AND I'M SAYING SOMEONE ELSE'S WORDS.
THAT'S NUTS.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW, I TRULY BELIEVE THAT TOGETHER WE ARE SO MUCH BETTER THAN WE ARE APART.
AND NOT IN THAT CREEPY WAY. REALLY, I'M *INSPIRED* BY YOU.
I DON'T GET LOST IN MY OWN HEAD LIKE I USED TO.
THIS WORLD IS A SCARY PLACE. YOU BEING AN AVENGER--IT'S SO...SCARY.
EVERY DAY THERE'S SOME IDIOT IN OUR FACE TRYING TO RUIN IT.
AND EVER SINCE WE GOT TOGETHER, I JUST HAVEN'T CARED.
AND NO GOON ATTACKED US AT OUR WEDDING, SO I'M GOING TO TAKE THAT AS A GOOD SIGN.
AND EVEN *IF* THE WORST HAPPENS...
IT'S A WEIRD FEELING--BUT I KNOW FOR A FACT WE CAN DEAL WITH IT.
LOOK AT THAT KID OVER THERE. *LOOK* AT HER. WE *MADE* HER.
AND I *LOVE* WATCHING YOU BE A FATHER.
SO MUCH SO THAT I'D WEAR THIS BIG POOFED-OUT DRESS.
I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW IN MY WORDS.
THIS IS WHY I SAID YES TO ALL THIS CRAZY.
THAT'S WHY.
ARE YOU DONE?
PRETTY MUCH.
OKAY, WELL...
...I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE.



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